Interview with [P12]

P = Participant at case study institution

The following conventions are used in transcription of spoken interviews:

[replacement information in square brackets]

[redacted information in grey in square brackets]

[?] = unintelligible missing word(s); immediately following word = unclear[?]

[#] = redacted numerical information

CAPITALS to signify emphasis in speaking

((Extraneous information in double brackets))

[P12]

Professor [name] and she's, of course, more involved with the teaching side of the university and might give additional information about English programs.

Researcher

Thanks so much. Yeah. I mean, the reason we wanted to talk to you, you know, if you had time available was because we're also looking at the role of GOVERNANCE and educational reforms, so.

[P12]

Umm OK.

Researcher

And so also the role and your interactions say with the ministry for example.

[P12]

OK.

Researcher

So we started by looking at the Netherlands because they were EARLY implementers of English language programs. I'm looking at Austrian, we have some other countries we're looking at to to get a picture of different parts of Europe. And so, yeah, maybe to warm up, maybe you could just tell me a little bit about your role as [governance role] and how it involves dealing with the BMBWF or the ministry.

[P12]

Umm.

Researcher

Um that part of your role?

[P12]

Yeah, OK. Austria has undergone a big change in the relation between government and universities in the early 2000s, so-called Universitätsgesetz 2002, which is VERY different than what we what we had before, what we had before was the direct interference of the government in ANY major decision, including especially hiring of professors. Now this has completely turned around. We are in some very good sense autonomous universities, although we get still most of our funding from the government, not all of it. Of course we are encouraged, we have a lot of European Union projects, industry money and so on. But the bulk still comes from the government, BUT in a different way than before.

The procedure is that we have a, not a YEARLY budget, but a budget for THREE years, uh to negotiate this is a quite complicated process, uh, which has to be accepted because the state is funding us, of course. So we have to agree that we have to offer the state or the government WHAT we plan to do, of course, in LARGE terms, which programs of studies we want to STRENGTHEN, which one occasionally be abolished, some because there are not enough students, especially WHERE we expand our scientific expertise, career models for uh scientists, so these are AIMS which are not usually written down in numbers, but sort of colloquially. And this is the so-called 'Leistungsvereinbarung' and every half year during these three-year periods, we have a one day meeting with the ministry where we tell each other what we think, how the progress has been made. Now the major part of this 'Leistungsvereinbarung' is when we have agreed about the AIMS, and this is not an easy discussion always because DOING something costs money and we have to BALANCE the COMMITMENTS we make also with with the money we expect, and there's sort of a well, it's a complicated negotiation, and then we get in the end a lump sum for three years, which for the [case study university] is something like, I don't know, the precise number now [number of Euros] for a three-year budget period.

And as soon as we have that, we are, there's no strings attached. We are THEORETICALLY free how to spend this money. When I say theoretically it means of course we have at the same time to achieve or mostly achieve the aims we AGREED on. So spend the money for that. But this is STILL a lot of freedom because in these 'Leistungsvereinbarungen', we do not agree that we fill a professorship on the [specific subject area] or whatever, but we we we do this in a bright, quite broad scale, we could say, well, we are, we will be strengthening [general subject area] with an emphasis of on the [geographic area] or something like that, but NOT in more detail. So HOW we do this is up to us, and most important, WE hire the professors and we hire actually ALL staff.

We advertise and then there is a a committee of peers, of course, there are external referees and then the FINAL decision is up to [governance role] and there's NO minister above that. And that has been a negotiate also the contract, the resources and that's I think the MOST important thing a [governance role] at an Austrian university now DOES [redacted identifying information]. They will stay at the university much longer than I ((chuckling)). So they will they will SHAPE the scientific image of the university for DECADES to come. So so THAT'S a very important thing, and a speciality at this LARGE [case study university] is that we are VERY internationally oriented. We have professors coming from everywhere in the world actually. So if I, maybe not Antarctica, but ALL other continents are covered. We hire a lot, a lot of people from a lot of people and where it makes sense, I mean [geographic region subject area], we would hire a [country national] if if appropriate we have a an, in [geographic region subject area] we have a a professor from [country] whom we hired from [country]. So international experience, but we don't hire only from Upper Austria or Lower Austria. So this is this is QUITE important for the university. NOT everybody at the university is happy with that because of course maybe 30 years ago it was a natural thing that if you did your PhD at university, maybe spent one year abroad, came back, then eventually you became professor at that university. This is now COMPLETELY different because we are thinking of us as an international university.

Also ANOTHER thing which is important, we introduce now a REAL tenure track system.

The full professor hiring is as a at a RELATIVELY late academic age, I mean full professors in the humanities are at least in the mid 40s, because they have to have written two books and so on. In natural sciences, usually younger. But now the tenure track system is, I would say, very much like the American system. We hire people three years, usually after the PhD, where they should have spent at least two years abroad or COME from abroad to us, which is the majority. And THEN they get assistant professor and after four years there is a decision about tenure as associate professor and then every three years there is an internal competition of ALL the associate professors in ALL fields at the university. We just had that there were about [#] applicants and we promoted [around one fourth] of them to full professors. This is done every three years, so you see this is a different kind of track to a full professorship, but our experiences are very, very good. We get TOP people.

[#]% come from outside Austria, but it also means if you look at the other [one fifth]%, those from Austria have a good chance, but they have to be competitive, especially if somebody gets an ERC grant, it's nearly guaranteed, NEARLY not, depends on a FEW other things to get one of these tenure track positions. So that's sort of our PERSONAL policy and to come back to your original question 20 years ago this could not have been done, because THEN every appointment went up to the MINISTRY, and now WE develope the strategy are they universities could do it and DO actually different strategies for hiring. ALL we have to show is after these three years, we have to CONVINCE the ministry that we spent the money well. So is there's a lot of especially on MY level, there's a LOT of deciding power but also a lot of responsibility.

Researcher

Right. And that comes from the autonomy granted through the University's Act.

[P12]

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Researcher

Can I ask, you said that after the PhD studies that they should have spent some period abroad, so usually from three years afterwards, then they would start on this kind of system of making their way into the tenure track. Is that a requirement or is that just a preference that you have?

[P12]

Now it's a, it's a requirement when we advertise this position. It's a little bit more open. They should have spent at least TWO years from the BEGINNING of their PhD studies outside the [case study university]. So if somebody did a diploma at university then went to whatever [university name] did the PhD there, they could come immediately back. But this is also not the natural case. I mean, many of them then STAY where they are because the American system gives them good opportunities, of course. But we would not appoint somebody assistant professor just after completion of the PhD without having spent at least two years or two or three years at the major out outside university outside of Austria.

Researcher

Can I ask what, how would you explain the reason for that? So what is your reasoning for requiring a two year stay in another country?

[P12]

Yeah. Because umm one thing my personal experience, but not only MINE, but also ALL the other members of [governance body] or all the let's say [governance roles] HAVE spent some of their time at that time mostly in America. And if I remember my, I spent I think [#] years in America at different universities and THAT'S where I learned even more than during my studies work to work hard, got new uh many work hard in Austria too, but at an AMERICAN University, you also take TEACHING much more serious because the STUDENTS fund the university, so you have to do a good job in teaching. And of course, because of all these conferences there, the ACCESS to first rate depending on the field of course, first rate advisors is just ((shakes his head in admiration)).

And the climate of research in America at that time was just great, and when I came back from America, I've certainly was different, both as far as personal properties as a scientist and also of course as experience is concerned, but nowadays it need not be AMERICA, though still I think in my field [subject area] America is STILL the place to go, but NOW through the unification process, the partial unification process in Europe there's a lot of possibilities also to go to other to Dutch universities or wherever.

We we want actually, but this is not not a formal requirement that our people go to university where NOT GERMAN is the language of instruction to get some REAL international experience. But it's not a formal requirement, but nobody actually, nearly nobody, there are always exceptions, should be at a major university from his first semester to retirement as a professor, which was 30 years ago not unheard of, but now it's it's different and it's good for everybody.

Researcher

Umm, OK. And when I looked at the Universities Act it mentions a a counter current principle or 'Gegenstromprinzip' between the universities and BMBWF. So in respect of the NATIONAL development plan, the GUEP ((laughing))?

[P12]

Yeah, yeah, we're just looking at that.

Researcher

It sounds so silly, sorry, and the university development plan. So I was wondering in your experience, what does this mean in practice in terms of the EXCHANGE that happens between the university and the ministry?

[P12]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, of course we are a state university system. So I consider it legitimate that the STATE as one of the partners actually one of the responsible partners lays out in broad terms what THEY want to achieve THROUGH the universities FOR the country within the next 3,5,7 years. There are several, several levels of these plans because we don't have only university but also universities of applied science, pedagogical, there's on top a so-called 'Hochschulplan', which is much less in detail, and the GUEP, or whatever you call it, is the framework into which we have to embed OUR development plan. But fortunately and we have now, we're just in the process of commenting the first draft, and I must like I CAN say that from period to period it gets better. Because also the ministry, both universities and ministry, had to gain experience with this new way of operating and the GUEP which I just saw a few days ago, there will always be some things which we will criticize, but all over it's quite OK. It sometimes is, let's say too overloaded with aims, but the ministry, because that all costs money, of course, but the ministry acknowledges themselves because they say in one paragraph that to fulfill all these aims, we'll need continued increasing funding for the university. That this is now a special problem in this high inflation uh situation is, of course, to be acknowledged and we're just negotiating how to do about it, but also this GUEP is not so is precise that it gives every university a VERY specific task. So it does not say, well, [case study university] should not do [subject area], that should do [subject area] themselves. They just say about it something like large equipment should be shared in common in, in, in, in, in, in in common structures by at least two or three universities, which makes sense.

This thing is always a bit questionable for the [case study university] because [redacted identifying information]. So umm this, but on the other hand they understand that and there are always way around so what I hope this time works better is the temporal coordination because it also happened before that the GUEP was actually put into law at the time when our development plan was already finished, because we we have a time frame when we HAVE to do it, this time frame actually starts now a year from now, the new development plan has to be essentially finished. It still needs then, OK, this this development plan is done by the rectorate, NOT by the senate, NOT by the council.

The senate has to be- be the has to be given two months for commenting on it, but they cannot reject it. But in REALITY this means of course, then we establish a committee between them and us, and we try to incorporate some of their remarks into our plan. And finally, the university council has to has to approve it, and then this is the basis for the next round of the 'Leistungsvereinbarung'. So of the so there's always a year where there's only ONE year where there is no major negotiation with the ministry going on, but also this year is full of reporting. So some people at university say we do too much reporting, we report about every detail. But for ME this is the price for autonomy. I mean we can DECIDE many things themselves ourselves, but that of course should also mean that we are ACCOUNTABLE and the ministry at least has the right to to ask and to be informed of what we are doing with the money. Sometimes it's a bit it's a bit a burden, of course, but I think this is MUCH better than if the ministry will decide things. And I think also in the ministry this will be the GENERAL view, not probably of EVERY Member there, but the general view will be like that. So in summary, this governance structure works quite well because, but I say one caveat because well, it gives US financial security for three years. We don't get more and don't get less. But now inflation comes. So what now?

There WILL be we we cannot fulfill our aims if there's not a substantial addition to this, and this is not a there's no mechanism in the law for that, I mean there could be some, but but I'm I'm still confident that this will have to be happen because it applies to ALL institutions in Austria. It is applies as well to hospitals and to the military and to the police, to social security, ALL have to get additional funds for fulfilling what they're what they have agreed to do. And I think schools and I think the universities just CANNOT be left out. That would be a COMPLETE catastrophe. But I don't think that will happen because we would, no, we would NOT have to close, but we would have to set free a lot of personnel, of course. And that's not what we want because just one last sentence, [case study university] in the last five years, we did our largest expansion since the middle of the 19th century. So we got a lot of budget increase in the last 5-6 years and we USE that to increase our the number of our professors very considerably.

Researcher

And and so um coming back to the 'Gegenstromprinzip'. So a lot of what you talked about was kind of bottom-down in terms of your reporting, I guess that 'Wissensbilanz' happens every year, doesn't it? And you have to ((moves hands to indicate submission)).

[P12]

Yes.

Researcher

And and how about how do, because of course there are two flows when they talk about 'Gegenstromprinzip'. So how does what you're doing influence them? I mean, you said you've recently received the next National Development Plan, so do you give feedback on that to to them?

[P12]

Yeah, sure. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. We are ASKED to give feedback and I think we have until mid-October. So there's a lot of time. And I was also together with my successor's [governance role] in a meeting in a PERSONAL meeting with the key players at the ministry about the NEXT level, the so-called 'Hochschulplan' and I see that already NOW they um SOME of the statements I made there made some impact on the new version. So yes, we will, as I said before, this time the GUEP, I consider much better from our point of view than the last few times. We will still make comments on that in the in [governance body] and ALL universities will do, and certainly SOME things will be taken up, others not. So that's what they mean by 'Gegenstromprinzip'. Whereas the next step, our 'Entwicklungsplan' does NOT have to approved by the ministry. It's OUR 'Entwicklungsplan', BUT the next step that comes with the funding then, the 'Leistungsvereinbarung', is a contract between both parties. So ALL these documents have to fit in. We could NOT for instance, ask for major money for a project which is NEVER mentioned in the 'Entwicklungsplan'.

Researcher

OK. Right. So this 'Hochschulplan' is for the four sectors in Austria. Has it happened yet or is it just starting now that they're starting to develop?

[P12]

Yeah, it's it's happening over the summer, actually. The FIRST meeting I was THERE was beginning of May, I think. They they sent us a they discussed the draft actually in an open meeting in the, was it online, ah yeah, I think it was online, yeah. And I, we had it before, I had a LOT of comments. And now in the version and also others of course now in the version I see that SOME of the comments of MINE which are considered important are already in the next version. So this process is in some sense serious because they TAKE us serious. So they, not not EVERYTHING we say will be accepted, but they think about our proposal, so it's a REAL negotiation.

And in the end, I mean, although this is quite trivial to say, we ALL want a functional university system.

Researcher

Yep.

[P12]

There are of course there are BASIC disagreements. A basic disagreement until a few years ago was should university be completely open, or should there be ADMISSION criteria. And NOW now we have a mix of both. I mean, that was also a very important step, but it needed legal change. We got now for some some study programs which are especially overbooked entrance exams, the most prominent one is [subject area] where we have about [#] places and [#] applicants, in [subject area] of course, which is not at my university, also [subject area], [subject area], but there are still a lot of study programs where you just, when you have a high school degree, of course where you just enter and you are there, and some of them have not so IDEAL ratios between students and professors.

Researcher

Mm-hmm. OK, so this is, do you think this is also an ideological shift as well from having an open university to a more restricted?

[P12]

Yes uh yes. Yes, it had, I mean before that we had a a Social Democratic dominated government. And after that we had different governments of slightly different ideological, yeah, so they're both some ideol- ideology change, but it was NOT very dramatic, I mean, it was not like in America that everything you wanna go at the university has just very scarce resources. We have still now in law, for instance, we introduced the new bachelor's master's program, [subject area], and THAT'S heavily overbooked. And we want this to be sort of an ELITE studium, so we accept only I don't know what the precise number quite a few number of people so would be a lot of competition. But there is the general diploma [subject area], which also has admission criteria, but much it's much easier to get in there. And [subject area] of course NEEDS to have quotas because of the practical work, I mean you cannot, you it's it's a bit banal but you you need enough patience for a [subject area] curriculum, because they have to SEE all the time[?]. So [subject area] is the most SEVERELY restricted, but it's not concerns, that does not concern my university.

Researcher

OK, well, um in the Universities Act, it states that you're allowed to restrict numbers if you have a a program in a foreign language, such as English, so do you think that has some effect on your decisions sometimes to implement English language programs?

[P12]

Yes, it HAD in the beginning because the first uh first ENTRY exams, we could do only for English language courses, and that's why or foreign language, whatever it is, we had one in Dutch, I think. And that's why in the beginning this was used not only out of the desire to do a course in English, but also because you could restrict students there. In the meantime, that's not the case, at least not on the large scale. I mean there is, for instance, one program in [subject area], which has about 35 places and it's a cooporation between central European universities, [city], whatever, [city], [city], I think, and [case study university].

And there for practical reasons it's necessary to do it in English. It was NOT the purpose to restrict the number and the restricted the number not very severely, it's about 35 in their specialized program. So I think NOW that in many other programs we CAN set quotas, although much higher usually. The this PRETEXT of doing an English course JUST because we want control admission is not the case anymore.

Researcher

So you mentioned that it might have been towards the BEGINNING. So I'm I'm interested in uh, your awareness of the or your living through the historical context. So when do you think the beginning was or ROUGHLY what period of time do you think this being able to restrict numbers for English would have would have happened?

[P12]

I would say in the mid 2000s so but I don't know the precise year 2005, 2006 something like but [name] could tell you in detail, and the the the BROADER access restrictions came in the middle of the 2010s, something like 2015 or 16.

Researcher

OK, that's great. So when I look at the national Austrian and you mentioned that when you're writing your development plans or drafting them that you have your OWN very much your OWN plan of what to do. But it also somehow aligns with the National Development plan goals to SOME extent.

[P12]

((nodding))

Researcher

So when I look at the objectives of the National Development Plan, it looks like uh, for example, internationalization and ECR development, so 'Förderung des Nachwuchses', might be quite relevant to English language programs. Do you think that influences you in any way, whether you are aligned with that.

[P12]

That but but you see this GUEP, or what they will call it is aimed at ALL universities in Austria with the same words, and the [case study university] is by its makeup an international university. So we hire, I would say [#]% of our professors from outside Austria, NOT only Germany and Switzerland, but especially in the last few years, a lot from England uh England, Scotland currently now even from Northern Ireland, one because of the Brexit, of course, there was a good market for us. We hire from the United States, we have partner universities in [US city], in [China city], in [Japan city] and few, I mean REAL research partner universities. So internationalization has happened in the last 20 years.

Researcher

Right.

[P12]

Um student body not yet. Of course we have uh, [#]% international students, but out of those, MANY of them are Germans, which ARE international, but it's still a different kind of international, the same language. And that is because the numerus clausus in German is stricter than in Austria, and also [city] is a nice city to live and to study in of course. So what we would want to is to strengthen internationalization in master’s and in specially PhD programs. We HAVE a lot of foreign PhDs because when uh professors, when we hire professors from outside, they usually get some personnel. They get PhD students and they usually take the PhD students they had before WITH them. So but what we would like more just established [#] so-called doctoral schools and they should have. And they do have already that say international visibility. These doctoral schools should not be just for our OWN master students who do a doctorate. And they ARE not, but they should attract, especially in our top fields like [subject area], people from ALL over. The ESSENTIAL thing, of course, for getting PhD students from outside is they are able to have to be able to provide funds for them.

And we have a lot of uh research money for PhD students, students from the Austrian Science Fund. We are just one of 22 universities, but we have [#]% of the money from the Austrian Science Fund. We have more than [#] ERC grants, [redacted identifying information], and the ERC grants of course they provide PhD positions, so that helps these programs and also other European Union programs help to fund to a LARGE extent foreign ERC students and THEY are of course foreign PhD students. Now THEY are a basis also for maybe later tenure tracks because they come from outside already, do their PhD here, then the Austrian Science Fund has quite good programs for sending them abroad for, say, two years, Schrödinger Programm, for instance. Then they could get an ERC or we have a high level postdoc program called [name of program], where will also get some resources for their OWN research and in the END they could apply or even get an ERC grant so that would be the IDEAL career somebody would make. But that's not the same at ALL universities, because you need a lot of universities have have have GOOD external money, but WE are strong on on the BASIC research money the ERCs and the FWF and THAT's the best possibility of getting money for PhD students.

Researcher

Right. So I heard that the doctoral schools have a contract with your university that requires them to forge international collaborations. Is that true?

[P12]

Yes, yes, yes.

Researcher

So what? What is meant by that?

[P12]

First of all, I mean they have to advertise their positions, not when they become available, but once a year in each FIELD there is a certain time when the big conferences are where there is a MARKET for PhD students, and the first thing they have to do is to go get get into that time frame so that they are attractive. If you advertise positions after the major universities have done it in America, then you get maybe the 2nd grade.

And of course internationalization means also that the FUNDS we give to doctoral schools is a quite additional funds should enable them to invite guest professors, short-time lecturers. Also, the students themselves should organize programs like this. They will get some money for this. So um then important thing of doctoral school is that they do not have just one advisor. There's still a professor who is their MAIN contact person, but there should be at least 2-3 advisors who also look at the part of the thesis. They should be part of the group of a cohort. That's why we advertise at the same time so that there's a group of PhD students in the in related field developing the learn of each other. And when I say that, well, we have [#] now it's quite new program, not ALL of them have implemented it already to the stage where we want it, but it's an ongoing process and THAT'S the aim behind this.

Researcher

OK. So I mean when we talk about internationalization and um because a lot of this seems to be geared towards internationalization, so is it, do you think it's driven by a research agenda or?

[P12]

Yeah.

Researcher

Um what? What? What would be the main DRIVE of internationalization in your view?

[P12]

I have two things. It's the research agenda, of course, I mean, because we have we hire so many people it it's the question who was there first the hen or the egg. You know this thing? Yeah. So, we hire, and also my predecessor did, a lot of people from outside not ma- having made all their career at the same university in [case study university].

And of course, they're bringing their international contacts. So the first thing which was really internationalized by already 20 years ago at least, was RESEARCH, and then they own, they ALL have their, like I did also of course, own research partners all over the world, actually. And now the next step for university is somehow to combine this to look, where are universities, where OUR staff has a lot of relations and then forge some university-wide cooporation agreement, like we recently recently did it with [city in Japan], which also provides money for scholars going there for two months and vice versa. So that's the next level.

But there's a COMPLETELY different driver, namely the Erasmus programs, of course, for students we have, I think [#] in normal times, not pandemic times. Uh, about one roughly [#] students each year or each semester, I'm not sure ((laughing)), going out from Erasmus Exchange and the same number approximately coming in. And THAT has big impact, of course, because our students, when they come back, they have an international perspective and also they develop networks among the students. So I think there are two different drivers, and I would say the driver from the RESEARCH is more global, whereas the driver from the students is Europe, of course, BUT there are now these [European university network] that [name] actually initiated and [case study university] as part of ONE of them, the so-called [name]. And this is with [German university], I will not get all of them. So [#] [Belgian university], [German university], [Czech university]. Well, I'm not sure about, yeah [Czech university] also, yeah. So and this will then LINK. So far I think internationalisation has been quite separate in research and personnel development and in teaching. But I hope that this [European university network] will merge these two things because it's the same, it's the same AIM that well, the aim for the students is that they get international experience and they get something like European citizens. That's why it's also restricted mainly on Europe, whereas in research I mean, you go wherever the best people are. That's not restricted to Europe.

Researcher

So um I mean, so we've made this kind of well, we haven't really talked about English language programmes very much, but I guess where you have internationalization often you will have English language programs. Is that fair to say?

[P12]

Yeah, yeah, but it's not necessarily English language programs in the curriculum, but the lecturers just talk English. I mean, if if there is are students in the room who don't cannot follow a German lecture, then it's just done in English. So most of our curricula now say language of instruction German or English, and then sometimes there's a requirement that one must be able definitely to finish this curriculum in either of these two languages, meaning that not all courses are done in both languages, but they're for every student that has a program that without knowing German he or she can get through the curriculum and also vice versa. And so the PURELY English program is maybe not the not the way to go, but programs where English and German are both available because you know we have also students from Eastern Europe whose German might be better developed than English, but but but it's OK. Also in committee meetings I have a lot of professors whom I hired with whom I still talk English. We have a FORMAL requirement if I hire a professor, he or she has to learn as much German in three years as necessary to function in committee meetings. But still, we have a lot of committee meetings in English because that just doesn't work. So if you go to a regular meeting of whatever hiring committee, so most many of the times, at least, the discussions will be in English, all the tenure track minutes, which I get for deciding who gets the positions, everything in English.

Researcher  
OK, and if so, have you, is there a different side- perspective on, so you mentioned that solely English language programs aren't always as good in terms of not flexibly allowing the student to make their way right through.

[P12]  
But it depends on which field and which level. I mean in a PhD program there's nothing against English. But if it's in German literature, you can see it differently, or in a [subject area], it's much more important that people can fluently read Latin for instance. So ALL this depends a lot on the field and also on the level. Bachelor courses in English, there ARE lectures in English in bachelor courses, are not our main aim because we want to be attractive for foreign students MAINLY at the Master and PhD level. Although we have a lot of foreign students, especially German also on the bachelor bachelor level, but that's on a different reason namely the overflow from Germany.

Researcher  
Right, right. So I mean, related to what you've just said, do you ever encounter any kind of resistance from subject areas where they would typically be taught in German because it's a rich tradition of research in German?

[P12]  
Yes, yes, yes. Occasionally, occasionally, for instance, every five years I have to do an evaluation of the professors, which is quite a time-consuming process. They have to submit a self report what they did mainly in research in the last five years. Five papers have to be included and then we ask at least three international referees. I get the referees report, the professor can comment, and then I do a one hour talk to this professor and discuss it with them and there might be uh resources if it's very good and so on, and this is all done in English, and there are some professor who insists they should do it in German, because if somebody cannot read German, he is not an expert in his or her field. But occasionally I allow that, but it's the exception, the absolute exception.

Researcher  
And how about the programs for the students? Is there some resistance to increasing the English language in the actual programs offered to the students or?

[P12]  
Ah this this I don't know because uh, [name] whom you talked to would be much more. I don't think so, but because of the flexibility means I think nearly every student who came from Austria, not maybe from from the Czech Republic, but from here will understand that English language after a few weeks fluently. There might be some who on principle don't want that, but I don't think this happens otherwise since we uh, make it possible unless it's in the legal documents purely English course that everybody can finish it also going a German path. I don't think so, but ask [name].

Researcher  
OK. Thank you. How about? Sorry I'm I'm I'm aware, we're almost finished, I just wanted to ask one last question. So um, you know is is the shift towards English programs, would you say more from bottom upwards or do you sometimes also say something in target agreements that would kind of make it kind of from top downwards ((laughing)).

[P12]  
Yeah, both. But you have to consider it, about I think 20 years ago it was ILLEGAL to use any other language than German in Austria universities. So maybe 25 years ago, I don't know. And then the first step we got at least a PERMISSION in law to teach in ENGLISH. And from THERE'S a long way, I think now it's now it's it's a DEFACTO pressure from students, also Erasmus students, why should an Erasmus student from Portugal come here if everything is German, of course he or she would have to do a German course. I mean one of my [personal relations] intended to go to Denmark and she had to do a Danish course. But I think this would not have been enough, she went into France, would not have been enough to follow a lecture in Danish so by that, by that, Erasmus, there is the bottom up pressure somehow to do many things in English. And there's also, I must say, top down pressure from the [governance role], not PRESSURE, convincing, because if we want to be more international with our PhD students, of course, then I mean I think I would think that in the natural sciences virtually ALL PhD theses are written in English.

Uh, maybe not in the humanities, I don't know, but also still a lot of them THERE. And it's also in the interest of the of the professors, at least in most fields, to get READ in American journals and also this ominous topic of rankings.

Rankings is important, but it's not AS important as politicians always do it. We are QUITE good in subject rankings. We have, for instance, in Shanghai, we are number [#] in [subject area] and number [#] or something WORLDWIDE in [subject area]. But there's a whole university, but we are exceeding [#]. So not as good as we want it to be, but ONE point is also that there is a BIAS towards English. So, citations of papers in ENGLISH tend to be higher than citations in GERMAN, and these are all indicators for the rankings. So in this sense we try to convince, and that's also for evaluation of professors FIRST to publish mainly in peer review journals. It's not the same in all fields, I realize that, AND if possible in English if there's not a compelling reason to address the German market.

Researcher  
Umm, OK, OK, great. And is there anything you wanted to mention that I didn't give you the CHANCE to talk about?

[P12]  
No, I think we had, I had a chance to talk about a lot of things, yeah.

Researcher  
No, it's been brilliant and you've touched on so many different factors. So it's super for our project.